

This Old House

MAY 2004

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GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



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With Windows in Mind

Explore innovative ways to express yourself with windows and doors.

Photographs by Emily Weiser Redfield

Like the houses shown at the Lubliner Film Festival, the Andersen® iHOUSE at Sanderson Film Festival shows how imagination, inspiration, and innovation can make something truly magical. The Andersen iHOUSE provides ideas for new ways to design with windows and doors in mind. Ideas that tell the way your family lives. Ideas that let children explore the world and provide busy adults a quiet refuge. Ideas that make your house a welcoming place for friends. Ideas that express your unique personality.

Located in the Glenwood development on a ridge overlooking the 2002 Olympic ski jump venue in Park City, Utah, the Andersen iHOUSE was built from the windows up. Windows open the house to the spectacular mountain views. Windows let in the warming winter sun and the cool breezes of autumn.

Windows were integrated into the architectural vision from the start. Designed by architect Michael Fleiss, AIA, each wall of the iHOUSE was carefully consid-



Special Advertising Section

Operational behind a series of motorized doors, the iHOUSE uses a variety of windows to draw views and light inside.

ered in the floor plan. These "wall pivots" were designed to compose views from various locations within each room and to bring natural light to different places throughout the day.

The form of the 6,000 square foot house is organic, with roof planes that fold into wall planes arranged along a number central stone spine. This 140-foot long stone wall serves both as an organizing element and as a screen from the street. The stone wall carries some of the exterior's structural loads, helping the house become a part of its rugged ridge-top site.

Andersen® air glass panels frame the front door. Nearby, custom, sewing,

and food windows are arranged in a two story tall geometric rhythm of shape and light. Even the lower door a stone wall extends through the house and out a pair of patio doors in the terrace. High above the great room, a ribbon of skylights provides an ever-changing pattern of light, creating a house that seems to tell time like a watch. Tucked just below the roof overhang, clerestory windows provide light and ventilation, while assuring privacy.

Interior windows open rooms to light and views, allowing you to look from one room through another to the outside. Carefully aligned interior windows give the master suite a view of the mountains while providing natural light for the great room below. In great bedrooms, interior windows look across an interior bridge, through exterior windows, to the mountains beyond. The lower portion of these same windows feature retractable glass, which changes from clear to opaque at the touch of a button. The upper portion is a hopper-style window. This unique combination allows for privacy and ventilation at the same time.

Other concepts explored include an interior window between the kitchen and dining room that doubles as a projection screen for television or movies. A slide-away section of the window serves as a computer screen, seamlessly integrating technology into everyday life.



The interior window between the living area and kitchen doubles as a projection screen for television or movies.

Andersen® air glass frames the front door.





The window looks out from a view of a modern building. Glass ceilings provide an open feel.

While both of these concept windows are still in the developmental stage, they demonstrate the changing role of windows in our daily lives.

But most of the idea in the Andersen *inHOME* are based on windows that are available today—stack windows arranged in not-so-stock ways. Innovation can make windows do more than provide light, air, and views.

On the mountain slopes of Park City, Utah, the Andersen *inHOME* at Sundance Film Festival provides a vision of how windows can perform beyond traditional expectations to enhance all aspects of our lives. Windows become the inspiration for a new way, a better way, to view the home and the world outside.

Although the Andersen *inHOME* at Sundance Film Festival is not open to the public, you can visit it on the Internet. For a virtual tour and additional information, visit www.anderseninhome.com/USC. Keyword: Andersen *inHOME*.



An interior window in the guest suite looks through window screens, providing ventilation and views.



A view of skylight provides an ever-changing pattern of light in the guest room.

Look both ways
before crossing the room.

Andersen® *inHOME* at Sundance Film Festival

Development: Graywolf, Park City's Premier Private Lodging Community
(435) 615-9455, toll-free 1-877-516-9455 www.graywolf.com

Architect: Michael Jenks, AIA, principal, WJ Architects, Ltd., Minneapolis
(612) 677-7000

Builder: Wilma Construction, Knoxville, Utah (801) 545-6566

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6 TIPS FOR YOUR HOME

1. Fix your walls. Carefully place windows to frame a view just as you would frame a piece of art.
2. Think cross-directionally. Daylight and circadian rhythms can bring light in from above, allowing natural light to penetrate directly into the room while preserving privacy.
3. Enhance the window. Strategically frame windows to gather the warmth of the sun in winter, in summer, use roof overhangs to frame the view.
4. Bring windows inside. Interior windows allow a room deep inside the house to share views and light with an adjoining room and with the exterior.
5. Grid naturally. Use operable windows in opposite rooms or a room to provide natural ventilation.
6. Combine windows of different sizes and shapes to make larger openings and create rhythmic patterns.

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Andersen windows at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival

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88 BARNSTABLE TV PROJECT



112 THOROUGHLY MODERN MAKEOVER

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY
 BRYAN BUCHANAN
 STYLING BY SUNNY HENDRICKSON
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 THE OLD HOUSE.

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BRASS AND METAL BEDS

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; STYLING: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS



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JUST-IN-TIME ROSEBUSH ADVICE
Only last weekend I told my wife that I needed to transplant a rosebush but didn't know how or when to do it. My first issue of *TOM* magazine, March 2004, arrived a couple of days later and sure enough, Roger Cook provided all the info I needed in Ask This Old House. That's what I call serendipity!
—GAIL DUNN, BROOKLYN, NY

FOAM-RUBBER PADS
Nan's advice [Nan's Notebook, "Pre-treating Floor Tiles," March 2004] as using foam-rubber interlocking pads is a good idea, but beware! I used some of these in a bathroom for extra traction for a person with a physical disability, and when they got wet the dye bled onto the floor. I guess not all of those pads are suitable for wet places.
—JOAN GOVERNA, NY 11405

HINGE SECURITY
So the French doors on page 104 in "Just Got Through" March 2004. The downside to installing the doors is noting outward is that the hinges are now on the outside. All the locks in the world will not help sometimes from knocking the pins out to get in.
—BLAKE OLIVER, NY 11605

THE EDITORS REPLY You've brought us a good point, but there actually are hinges

designed to make out-swinging exterior doors more secure. Hinges with nonreturnable pins called NRP hinges or with safety studs, which prevent the closed door from being pried off the hinges even if the pins are removed, are available from many hinge suppliers (such as www.hardwaresources.com). Similar products for retrofitting existing doors in older homes are usually available through local mills.

A NEW OLD HOUSE
Just wanted to thank *TOM* for contributing unselfishly to our "Green Home" in the Shenandoah Valley. We've constructed it using all the good advice we've gotten over the years from Hens, Rich, Ray, and Roger. The heating is radiant floor heat, the foundation was poured/formed, the roof has waterproof membranes under the shingles, and all big joists and headers are laminated or engineered. We even found our green-roof chandelier through one of the magazine articles. Thanks again!
—JACQUEE HENNER, IN 46045

CLASSIC LIGHTING CONTROL
I enjoyed "Lighting Controls" [March 2004], but it didn't mention one method of controlling basic lighting that is both economical and easy to install, X10. I've found that X10 technology is a reliable method of controlling lights. It takes only basic electrical knowledge to install and is quite inexpensive, ranging from \$10 to \$40 per switch. X10 has many uses. I have used it for most of the lighting in the house, ceiling-fan controls, and even two-way thermostats that monitor the weather to control the temperature in the house.
—JOHN ELLIOT, NY 11965

THE EDITORS REPLY X10 technology is just one kind of what are generically known as powerline carrier (PLC) systems. Such systems use a harness consisting of cables of wiring to transmit signals to control lights, appliances, and security systems. The technology was invented in the 1970s and continues to be adapted for use today in many new and some out-of-the-box applications that simplify

[LETTERS]



simple plug-in switches, receivers, and control panels. In fact, this technology is behind Black & Decker's PowerWise system (above), one of the lighting-control products we featured in this article.

WANTED: YOUR ADVENTURES IN RENOVATING YOUR HOME
After 26 years in home improvement, we know that behind every renovation there's a good story that's full of surprises, challenges, and ultimately success. So if you've renovated your house and done most of the work yourself, please drop us a line and tell us about it. The results of your hard work may be featured in one of our future issues. Be sure to attach a color of before and after photos, floor plans, and a brief description of the project and the improvements made. Send to:
This Old House/OP
1895 Avenue of the Americas, 27th Floor
New York, NY 10036

punch list
Defines a list of items incorrectly done or remaining to be finished on a construction job. The photo credit on page 114 in the March 2004 issue was inadvertently omitted. The photo credit is by Brian Weber.

Address not to: Letters. The Old House Magazine, 480 Atlantic Ave., Suite 100, New York, NY 10014, or e-mail us at letters@oldhouse.com. Please include your full name, address, and telephone number. Published letters will be subject to editing and may be used in other media.

LIVE AND LEARN

BY NOSH ABRAHAM



Tim O'Leary
master carpenter
Norm Abram

A

s I write this, it's still winter and I've just gotten off a plane from Bermuda, where the show is following the renovation of an 1800s masonry house. It came back with a little local know-how—including a lesson on how the island's traditional roofs hold up to the yearly hurricane winds. Made of heavy stone slabs, called slates, and supported by skinny wood rafters, they don't look structurally sound. But it turns out that the slabs are tied together with ropes, and the whole thing is covered in a thin veneer of cement work. This process, together with the roofs' petanque-like shape, turns them into monolithic structures that almost support themselves. That was a real eye-opener.

Most of the time I don't have to travel quite so far to learn something new. When I pull up at a workbench next to Tim Sérs, *TOH* general contractor, I inevitably come away with some great tip. Working with Tim, someone born into the busi-

ness like me, gives me access to another lifetime of experience. When we build together, we swap tricks of the trade like baseball cards.

For instance, a couple of years ago at the Manchester project, I had to make templates for the inglenook's curved seats, and he suggested using drywall instead of plywood. Great idea—drywall is easy to cut with just a utility knife and I could fine-tune the curves with a rasp.

Of course, it isn't only builders who have something to teach me. *TOH* plumbing and heating expert Richard Titherway and landscaping contractor Roger Cook are so good at what they do that I instinctively call them with plumbing and landscaping questions. In fact, I just learned the right way to prune a hedge—water at the base, narrower on top—from watching Roger on *Ash: The Old House*. Then there's Leigh and Leslie Kern, the unique experts of *Plant*, who have worked with me a couple of times on *The New Yankee Workshop*. They've taught me about the history of the keritane that inspires me, as well as some of the terminology the original furniture makers used. Now I know what a Spanish knot is, and recently recognized its rectangular, ribbed profile on a chair in Bermuda.

Whether you're new to renovation or were born with a saw in your hand, you can never stop educating yourself. Just because Tim is a master carpenter doesn't mean I've done mastering my craft. Being curious and open to new ideas is a good trait to look for in any professional, and one homeowners—novice or expert—would do well to bring with them to any project.

**"JUST BECAUSE I'M A MASTER
CARPENTER DOESN'T MEAN
I'M DONE MASTERING MY CRAFT."**

COMING IN THE JUNE ISSUE

- Exterior makeovers
- TV project: Bermuda update
- Distinctive docks
- Installing in-ground sprinklers
- Handmade gates
- Smart closet design

ON SALE MAY 17

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[LESSON LEARNER]

Down the Drain

BY BOSS FLAVIN, BOULDER, COLO

So when I finally got around to fixing a leaking toilet seat, I grab my tools, shut off the water, and my glasses in my shirt pocket, and remove the toilet, moving it a few feet away so I can get the open drain hole. As I bend over to work on the bowl, my glasses take a swim dive out of my pocket. In the bowl, bounce three times, and swim down the open drain.

Now I have to consider how to retrieve my only pair of diving specs. Removing the drain isn't an option, since I have no idea



how far down the glasses have traveled—perhaps beyond the trap and on their way up to the septic field. Hoping that the glasses are still formed, I grab my refrigerator magnets and strap them together on a fishing line. I throw the line down the hole and feel some initial resistance as I feel it in. Finally attached are my somewhat soiled glasses.

Lesson learned? Get shorts with button-down pockets.

Get your own lesson in shanty-house to create. (2004) by Flavin is a book in the series of books by The Old House/DO, 195 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor New York, NY 10006.

Eau de Workshop

Falling nostalgic for 7th-grade shop class? A quick spritz from Denzler's sweat-soaked rosin spray will take you back. Other memory-stirring fragrances include dirt, paint, and poison ivy. Just the thing for that, or, special occasions. \$18 per bottle. Scented candles available for \$75. To order, go to www.fashionplanet.com.



Put
Unused
Parts to
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Use



From extra light fixtures to old windows, stuff get unused pile up during a house remodel. Throwing it all away even you and the contractor, which is why reuse centers make so much sense. The nationwide nonprofit accepts all sorts of building materials, new and used, when hauling them away for free. (These rules of thumb for shops help: If you wouldn't give it to a friend, don't give it to us.) Besides saving on disposal fees, donors get a tax write-off, just as they would at the Salvation Army. Reuse centers are also helpful at the beginning of a renovation, since these stores often sell for half the retail price.

To locate a reuse center near you, visit reuseinfo.org.

[BEFORE & AFTER]

Shaping Up a Cape

The 1960s Cape in Greenville, Ohio was the kind of house you could walk by a thousand times and never notice. But Jennifer and Richard Kinsley saw its potential. Their creative, cost-conscious makeover started with an asphalt shingle roof and a fresh coat of sage-green paint. What really gives the house character though is the A-frame-influenced gabled pergola over the front entrance and the pergola-topped, fenced-in garden to the left of the door.

How you dramatically altered the look of your home? See before and after snapshots, plus a brief description of the project, in The Old House/DO, 195 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor New York, NY 10006.



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It's Lawn and Garden Time

For a one-stop guide to transforming your yard, pick up a copy of *Complete Landscaping from The Old House Books*. With Roger Cook leading the way, experts cover every kind of outdoor project, from planting flower beds to laying a brick patio. Available for \$19.95 at bookstore-and-home centers, or at www.theoldhouse.com or www.suttonbooks.com.



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Simple Textured Walls

A wall covered in drywall can be made to look like plaster with a bucket of drywall compound and a plastic bag. First, trowel the compound onto the wall, then smooth a plastic bag over it (try a regular trash bag with one side seam opened up). Walk a few minutes and then peel back the plastic. The surface will dry rough or smooth, depending on how much compound you use and how firmly you press the plastic into the mud.

[FLASHBACK: 1993]



Ye Olde-Fashioned Way

BY RICHARD TETHEWAY

On 1993 TCHT's most popular project took us all the way to England, where we helped restore a top-floor flat in West London. There's no shortage of historic flats that project, not least of which is of the heavy English breakfast we ate each day.

But when early studies didn't have much the "drippin'" (that's "cupboard" to you and me) when on their head tools. Now the flat has been using and eating food for centuries, so these guys know their way around a tool box. But power tools were conspicuously missing from their arsenal. We were gonna change that, so we decided to get gathered up our best green-powdered wisdom, endless drills, etc. (and, for the low-and presented it to the crew. This was a fitting day, so the flat was on center being suitably impressed, lots of "Cheers for that" and "Nice one, mate."

Well, we never did the concrete step rolling that they set down the power tools and went right back to their ladders, screwdrivers, and localities. We realized then and there that when over Yankee ingenuity we had to offer, we weren't about to change the course of English history.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 128



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What a Difference!

"America's ugliest bathroom" gets a sophisticated makeover.

BY BARBARA CARLIN PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW MILLMAN

Henriette and Chris Korten dreamed of a luxurious master bath with his-and-hers tubs, a glassed-in shower, and a relaxing whirlpool tub as bold as a cozy fireplace. The problem was mapping how their current bathroom could be turned into their dream. "Our bathroom hadn't been touched since the 1970s," says Laura. "There was Dixie-Glo drag carpeting, marbled orange-and-yellow wallpaper, a plastic shower stall, hideous light fixtures, and a poor layout that included a wall of doors too tall to reach without a ladder." In addition, a window over the toilet had been covered up, which made the room dark, and the bath didn't even connect to the adjacent master bedroom. In fact, the Auburn, California, couple's bathroom was so unappealing they named it in America's Standard's 2012 America's Uglyest Bathrooms contest—and won!

The couple put their \$20,000 on retainer to work with designer Barbara Schmidt and contractor Dale Nichols, reconfiguring their 10-by-12-foot galley layout into the bath they wanted. By bumping out one wall nearly 3 feet and changing the floor plan, they were able to fit in all the upgrades, including larger windows, accessible storage, and a new window door to the bedroom. "By new-house standards our improved master bath isn't that big," says Chris, "but it's plenty big for us—and we love it."

in the new 12-by-12-foot master bath mirrored walls, a see-through shower, neutral colors, and a vaulted ceiling create the illusion of more space. Large windows bring in lots of natural light.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW MILLMAN

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design

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The Plan

The small galley was transformed into a bigger, brighter, more luxurious space.



ABOVE: A 7th-class, the Salt Lake girls' flag company, study Nordic wallpaper and a bird about.

LEFT: The focal point of the remodeled bath is a 5-foot whirlpool tub with a marble deck and a custom pane surrounded painted crown molding to match the trimwork. The remodeled gas fireplace, which can be operated by remote control, has a surround of mosaic glass tiles and a decorative mantel. It can also be a rejected piece of adjoining interior decorative glasspaned through the door.

WHAT THEY DID

- 1. **EXPANDED THE SPACE:** Introducing 22 inches into the bedrooms allowed the old 10-12-14 bath to accommodate a new layout.
- 2. **RELOCATED THE PLUMBING AND DOORWAY:** The plumbing was routed for the repositioned toilet, sink, and shower and new plumbing was run in the tub and replaced with a 4-inches flexible vent pipe. An installed in the 22-inch-thick exterior wall and the door was moved to the new location.
- 3. **ADDED A TUB AND IMPROVED SINKS:** Replacing the bath deck to a custom 2 inches thick it possible to fit in the 6-foot exterior tub. No-inches vent pipes. Sink the shower front has a makeup area.
- 4. **IMPROVED LIGHTING:** Two fixed-glass triangular windows were oriented (rotating) the one that was covered, and a larger angled window window replaced an old horizontal slider. Increased lighting.
- 5. **CREATED ACCESSIBLE STORAGE:** The repositioned closet-for-clothes and linen-hat is a great in accessible system.



Keywords: child sexual abuse; disclosure; social support

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Imagination at work





The Details

Luxurious touches and soothing colors add to the bath's sophistication and comfort.

① Chrome handles placed perpendicular to each other on opposite sides of the shower door add visual impact. On the outside, the 18-inch horizontal handle doubles as a towel bar; the inside vertical cut is 6 inches long.

② Turned-glass mosaic tiles—a choice inspired by the homeowners' love of the beach—line a recessed shower niche edged with matching subway tiles. The surrounding tiles run vertically to echo the effect of falling water.



③ Polished chrome tub fixtures include a convenient handheld shower head. The five-piece surround is made of the same turned-glass mosaic tiles as the shower niche.

④ A pocket door—chosen to optimize space—leads into the bedroom. The vanity cabinets, made of maple with an antique finish, have a familiar feel that fits them with the bedroom decor.

⑤ The shower floor's silver-oxide tiles come on mesh sheets for easy installation.



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RICHARD TRETHEWEY
PLUMBER
(NEW YORK)



TOM HELTS
GENERAL
CONTRACTOR



ROGER COOK
LANDSCAPE
CONTRACTOR



TOM SILVA
PLASTER CARPENTER

OUT WITH BASEBOARD HEATING

We've tried painting the hot-water baseboards in our 1883 Victorian, but they remain an eyesore. Can we eliminate the units to make them less visually obtrusive? If so, is this a job we can do?

PAUL SOLDA, NEWTON, Pa.



RICHARD TRETHEWEY REPLIES: Covering isn't necessarily the answer here. If you go running around with your existing baseboard units without doing some homework first, you'll probably end up wasting your cash indoors.

I'd recommend that you consider flat-panel radiators. (But the ones we used in the bedrooms of the Manchester TV project house—there are a number of nice-looking models, including some that are quite unobtrusive and remarkably efficient. Once you locate something you like, work with a heating professional to determine the size of each replacement unit. This depends on a variety of factors, including each room's size and orientation to the sun, the severity of your local climate and the energy efficiency of your house.

Also, leave the installation to a pro—replacing all the baseboards in a house calls for more mistakes-free soldering than most people can handle.

THE DOWNSIDE OF EPOXY PAINT

Now that winter is over (ahem), it's time for me to solve a problem in my two-car garage. The floor is painted with epoxy, and when snow melts off the car and lands on the floor it just sits there and forms a puddle. I have no idea how to contain this problem.

DEAN COOK, COVINGTON, La.

TOM SILVA REPLIES: Epoxy makes a great surface for a project floor because it's easy to clean. But it also prevents moisture from being absorbed into the concrete, so puddles tend to stay around longer. Short of wiping snow off the car before you drive it, about the only thing you can do is to place a large "weather mat" under the car. Various mail order companies offer these canvas vinyl mats, which have shallow grooves to absorb the slaps and protect the epoxy from road salt and grit. Canvas sure isn't your cat just roll up the mat and store it until winter.

THE COLOR OF MULCH

Every year, it seems I go through the same routine: I have yards of mulch delivered and spend lots of time spreading it around. It looks great for a while, then it gets melted down and turns a rather dreary color. Before



The fast-growing hydronic radiators installed at the Manchester TV project occupy just a few feet of wall space and produce 50 percent more heat per foot than ordinary hot-water baseboard panels.

I put down new mulch this year, so you have any alternative landscape suggestions?

BOB CORCORAN, SUDBURY, Pa.

ROGER COOK REPLIES: The color of old mulch is the least of your problems. Mulch takes nitrogen out of the soil and can't plant there where it comes into contact with them. If you don't remove the old mulch before putting down the new you can smother plants and kill them. In fact, you can add so much mulch over the years that it provides an avenue for termites to invade your home or causes rot whenever it touches the siding or trim.

My long-term advice to your question is: ground cover, ground cover and more ground cover. Some suggestions would be: snow berries, spreading juniper, microclover, aspen, low berries (*Arctostaphylos*), pachysandra, low-lying hellebores, yarrow (*Yarrow*), or any number of perennials. If they find your habitat to their liking, they'll save you a lot of labor and expense and will look a lot better than a barren mix of mulch and weeds.



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ATTACHING PANELING TO A CHIMNEY

Our brick fireplace dominates the small room it's in. To make it look less formal, I'd like to paint it with wood and paint the wood white. What's the best way to attach paneling to the brick?

RON HORNBAUM, SHELBY CTR., CALIF.

TOM SIDA REPLIES: Building codes are rather strict about the use of combustible materials around masonry fireplaces. The specifics are too complicated to discuss here. Show your plans to your local building inspector so you don't get into trouble down the road.

To answer your question, I'd drill into the brick just the moment and attach metal channels with masonry screws and then screw five-eighths type-X drywall to the channels before installing the paneling. That would create a fire-protected air space behind the wood.

But detailing this construction would be infinitely tedious, so I think you'd be better off considering materials other than wood. How about covering the brick with plaster instead? With it, you can get a silky smooth surface, a rough and rustic surface, or anything in between. Then paint it any color you want.

And since plaster is noncombustible, you won't have to worry about seepage or code restrictions.

BOOKCASE SECURITY

I have three large, freestanding bookcases in my hallway, which has a thin floor rail with velcroing below. What is the best way to secure the cases to the wall?

STEVEN HERRICK, GUNNVILLE, VA.

NORM ARRIAN REPLIES: A loaded bookcase is heavy, so you only need a simple connection between the bookcase and the wall. I'm assuming it's not leaning. However, just driving an anchor into plaster or drywall won't be sufficient. If your 4-year-old nephew ever decides to climb up the shelves to reach something on top,

one alternative approach is to use ball-and-socket brackets, the kind you can get at any hardware store. Fit one into brackets on each bookcase, one on each side. Screw the brackets into the studs with the long iron pinning screws, then move the bookcase into position and screw the projecting pins into the top of the case.

FLYING CARPENTERS

Is there a way to get rid of carpenter bees? And once they're gone, how do I keep them from coming back?

ELIZABETH WALLING, KENNY, N.J.

TOM SIDA REPLIES: It's hard to get rid of these large bees, which are often seen hovering



Carpenter bees make their cozy nests by chewing perfectly round 1/2-inch-diameter holes into bare, unpainted wood.

around house eaves about this time of year. Although they really sting, it's worth the effort to get rid of them because of all the very neat, 1/2-inch-diameter holes they drill into bare softwoods, particularly redwood, cedar, cypress, and pine. Once they're inside the wood, they turn 90 degrees and continue burrowing so they can make a nest. As you might imagine, this system the wood and allows moisture to get inside. Carpenter bees don't like to chew through painted woodwork, though, so the best way to keep them away is the best place is to maintain your exterior trim. Sounds like you're past this stage, however.

Plugging the holes won't help because they're trapped inside and just tunnel out somewhere else. So you'll have to contact a pest control expert. He'll probably apply an insecticide dust into the holes to dehydrate



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and let the bees. After the dusting, leave the bees alone for a week or so to let the bees spread the dust through their tunnels. When the bees are dead, plug the holes with epoxy or a two-part polyester wood filler and get a couple of coats of paint on the wood. When given and a dust mask when working around treated areas, dust residue left gets on your hands will dry them out.

If you have more than a few holes, don't even bother patching the damage. Just replace the entire piece with one primed on all sides. Pressure-treated wood doesn't deteriorate but I'm told borate-treated wood will. So might the solid cellular-PVC trim we used at the Concord cottage TV project. It looks just like painted wood and I've never heard of toxic leaching from it.

SEPTIC SLEUTH

We've lived in our house for quite a while but only recently started to experience problems with our septic system. Unfortunately, we don't even know where the septic tank is. How do we find it?

Justin Tora, Pomona, Ill.

NOAH ABRAHAM REPLIES: If you can't get this information from the former owners of the house, visit your town office. The town typically has records on the location of septic tanks, though the records don't always include houses as old as yours. You could also check local companies that pump septic tanks—they usually keep records too, and even a rough

sketch will help to locate the tank. I've heard of planting compasses (fishing electronic "beep" attached to a tether down a hole), then using a chlorine dipstick to listen for the hissing escape when a septic tank is underground tank. Or you could try this low-tech method on your own. Look at your yard on a frosty morning. Bad soil decomposition in the tank creates enough heat to melt frost and even small amounts of snow on the soil above the tank.

Once you find the tank, let a professional septic service take care of the repairs—this kind of work for homeowners.

PAINTING FLAGSTONE JOINTS

We love our house, which was built in stages from the late 1930s to the early '50s, but we're having problems with the grout in our flagstone paths and terraces. Whenever we try to repair it, the replacement material stays in place for only about a year.

Jerry Denton, Pasadena, N.Y.

ROGER COON REPLIES: Grout between flagstones (typically called mortar) fails when water gets into the joint and cycles of freezing and thawing in the winter eventually pop it out. Once it happens, your only choice is to dig out all the old crumbling stuff and replace it.

Start with an old screwdriver or small pointed trowel to dig down to the old concrete layer beneath the patio. I assume all the old grout is in one piece, good and bad. Is order to remove the number



A botched repair calls attention to the cracked mortar on this stone terrace.

of places where old mortar meets new. There are weak spots prone to water intrusion. Brush or blow out the debris—flushing out with water usually ends up introducing more dirt.

After an area is prepared, mix up a batch of mortar—3 parts sand to 1 part portland cement—to a slightly consistency. Fill the joints using a grout bag (it's faster than a trowel) then pack them tight with a pointed object. Next, with a damp rag, wipe away any mortar that dropped onto the surface of the stones.

Let the mortar set for about 15 minutes or so, then go back with the jointer and smooth the joints. This is called "tanking" if you don't do it, the joints won't be water-proof and will eventually fail.

Now you know why the walkways that are dry-laid in sand or stone dust. It's a lot easier to sweep a little sand or stone dust into the joints now and then than it is to repoint. But that's of just answering your entire terrace and starting over that's not an option in this case.

ROT-PROOFING A LAMPPOST

In front of my daughter's home, there's a ghost fence that terminates at a wood lamp-post. The post has rotted, but I can't seem to find new lampposts made of any other wood than pine, which I don't think will last very long. What do you suggest?

A.C. Eitel, Jr., Emmaus, Pa.

TOM SILVA REPLIES: Have you checked with stores that specialize in lighting lighting fixtures or that make outdoor fixtures? Most of them find that they sell wood lampposts too. Look for posts made from the heartwood of cedar, cypress or redwood and which will be more durable than standard pine or fir. And better than pressure-treated pine.

Of course, even these woods rot eventually, but there are a couple of things you can do to improve the post's durability. Start by treating the bottom of the post in a sealer-based wood preservative such as Copresol to seal out water and moisture rot. Just pour the preservative into a bucket and shake the post in it for a couple of days. Use a brush if necessary to spread the preservative up the post to a point an inch or two above ground level. Water rubbers gloves and goggles when working with this material, and be sure to follow all the application instructions. After the preservative dries, dip in a layer of asphalt-based foundation sealer over the portion of the post that will go into the ground. Let the dry for a week before putting it in the ground.

That taken care of the post, but you also need to prep and fill the hole right. Dig it at least 30 feet deep, or 5 inches deeper than the frost line, then fill up the first 6 inches of the hole with pea stone and tamp it down with a 2x4. The pea stone encourages drainage and prevents water from collecting at the bottom of the post. After you put in the post, backfill around it with pea stone tamped down in 3-inch-thick layers. Mix a little soil in with the pea stone so it will tamp down better. If the surrounding soil drains very well, you can use a mix of stone dust and gravel instead of pea stone and soil. Don't set the post in concrete, though. It helps moisture against the wood which accelerates decay.

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TALKING SHOP

CHOOSING AND USING TOOLS

LEVELS



Without a tool that shows you level and plumb you can't build a house that works well or looks good—not to mention living in it. Whether cabinets or trim or a door, the most basic such tool is a spirit level, which indicates level and plumb with a bubble inside a liquid-filled vial. At the high-tech end are laser levels, which project perfectly level or plumb lines onto a surface. Laser tools are great for layout work, but their fleeting lines aren't much help when you have to physically check the positioning of an object. For that, you need a tool with a bubble vial, which can rest on your workpiece or butt up against it. Only then can you be sure your work is on the level.

Basic Levels

TORPEDO ▶

FOR: Small jobs like helping corners and shelves, or working in tight spaces, as when doing plumbing installations.

HOW IT WORKS: Vials slide from front or top, can show both level and plumb. Some models have magnets for sticking to metal pipes; this one has a built-in light to make reading the bubble easier.

SHOWING: Stanley Lighted 9-inch torpedo level, \$14



BULL'S-EYE ▶

FOR: Leveling appliances or pieces of furniture.

HOW IT WORKS: Level rests on pads; adjust light or sides of piece until bubble is centered.

SHOWING: Sears Craftsman shoulder level, \$30



4-FOOT ▶

FOR: Precise carpentry across a long expanse, as when installing cabinets, trim, doors, or floors. Plumb models are suitable for regular work on gutters, doors, concrete slabs, and masonry walls.

HOW IT WORKS: Lengthy tool can span long distances. Unaffected by bumps and dips. Curved vials are more accurate, but only the bottom one is in the per-mil-column level at any given time.

SHOWING: Clark Tool Co. 48-inch wood level, \$90



2-FOOT 3-BEAM ▶

FOR: General-purpose leveling—helping gutters and shelves, installing cabinets, and even gutters, or plumbing pipes. Too short for decks, walls, trim, or concrete slabs.

HOW IT WORKS: Lightweight level holds several objects independently or vertically, with rails for level and plumb.

SHOWING: Stanley 24-inch FatMax level, \$20

WHAT ARE THE OUTER LINES FOR?

Many spirit-level vials have two sets of lines. When the bubble is centered between the inside pair, it indicates level. But where it touches one of the outer lines, it means the level is pitched at a 2-percent grade (about 1/4 inch per foot of run), the slope required for waste lines, sidewalks, and rain gutters to drain properly.



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